

The Great Wholesomeness in Buddhism

Buddhism always points out the path how to get rid of suffering and how to achieve the real happiness. As much as a person practices Buddhism, he or she is on the way of increasing happiness and decreasing suffering. If someone is on this path honestly, he is on the path of liberation. The Dhamma that the Buddha explained has six main qualities. The Dhamma is well expounded (*Svakkhato*), directly visible (*Sanditthiko*), immediately effective (*Akaliko*), calling one to come and see (*Ehipassiko*), leading onwards (*Opanaiko*), to be personally realized by the wise (*Paccattam Veditabbo Vinnuhi*). To achieve final bliss of liberation, we have to listen to the Buddha's message with good attention for our knowledge, and we have to reflect on that knowledge throughout our life. Also, we have to practice it in our day to day life as much as we can. The highest qualities we can practice to achieve liberation are loving kindness and mindfulness. The more we practice loving kindness and mindfulness the more we reduce greed, anger and delusion. The more we reduce these defilements the more we get rid of suffering. The more someone reduces unwholesome thoughts the more he or she attains the liberation. **Loving kindness and mindfulness are the highest wholesomeness what the Buddha taught.**

The main reason that we suffer is unwholesome thoughts such as greed, jealousy, anger, ill will, lamentation, lust and ignorance. Also if we are happy, our mind fills with wholesome thoughts such as generosity, loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, tranquility, wisdom. In this situation, the way to get rid of suffering is reducing unwholesome thoughts. And the way to achieve happiness is increasing wholesome thoughts.

According to Buddhism there are 1500 unwholesome thoughts. All of them can be divided into three. They are;

1. Desire (*Lobha*)
2. Anger (*Dosa*)
3. Delusion (*Moha*)

These are the main defilements which disturb our peace of mind. If we have more unwholesome emotions, it means we have more suffering. If we have less defilement, it means we have less suffering. If somebody needs to live with more happiness, he has to reduce these defilements. Desire means attachment as lust, craving or greed. Anger means conflict or ill will. Delusion means unknowing of the world reality or ignorance of impermanence.

Our success in the path of liberation depends on how far we have reduced these three unwholesome thoughts. We can see two levels on the path of reducing defilements. First level is the surface level. It is a temporary solution. The second level is deep level. It is the ultimate and permanent solution. In the second level, our vision is completely changed into the correct way and helps us to eradicate defilements completely.

By listening to the Buddha's teaching, we gradually go forward on the path of liberation. In the first level of reducing defilements, we can practice generosity to reduce desire. When we are ready to donate something to others concerning their qualities or needs, our mind is free from desire. Then greed in mind gradually decreases. Further when we practice loving kindness for all people in the world, anger also decreases. We mostly lose our inner peace because of anger. Also, people mostly suffer because of anger. Practicing loving kindness thinking "May all beings be well happy and peaceful" helps us to reduce anger and ill will. That is why the Buddha has recommended the importance of practicing loving kindness at the very beginning on the path of liberation. As the result of practicing loving kindness, we begin to see all beings as our own child. Then most of our conflicts with people cease. This attitude is the highest in the spiritual development. Practicing loving kindness is one of the signs that we are on the path of liberation from suffering and unsatisfactoriness. When someone practices loving kindness (*mettā*), other three sublime states also gradually increase. They are compassion (*karunā*), sympathetic joy (*muditā*) and equanimity (*upekkhā*). Brahmas who are in the Brahma realm live with these four sublime states. If a person can live with these four mental states, he is like a Brahma who lives in the Brahma realm. The Supreme Buddha pointed out the path how to life like a Brahma bearing a human body.

To decrease delusion, we should be knowledgeable about the world and ourselves. The Karmic law that means what we have done in our past lives and what we do in this life affects our future lives as well as this life. The Karmic law is a big shadow which acts behind us. If we have this knowledge about the karmic law, our patience gradually increases when problems come to our life. Also, the knowledge that everything is impermanent. The experience that we receive through our senses arises and ceases at the moment. If we have this understanding, we are able to live equally in sufferable or pleasurable situations.

In the second level, we go deeper to reduce defilements permanently. Here, knowledge, reflection and practice are very important. We have attachment and anger because of unknowing of experience. The nature of all our experience is instant. The experience that we receive with our senses arises and ceases at the moment according to conditions. When conditions are together, the experiences as forms, sounds, smell, taste, touch, mental formations arise at the moment. The experience doesn't come to the present from the past. And it doesn't go to the future from the present. **Not being occurred (in the past) comes to occurrence. Being occurred (at the present) will not go to (the future) occurrence.** (අනුත්ථා සම්භූතං නුත්ථා න භවිස්සති). When conditions separate, the experience ceases without anything remaining. This is the reality that we experience every moment. However, because of our ignorance we think that the experience remains after experience. We live in the ceased experience as soon as we think of something. This is the main cause of suffering. If we have this knowledge about the cause of suffering, we reflect on it again and again in our daily life. And also we try to eradicate defilements permanently by practicing the path leading to the cessation from suffering. To permanent understanding of this reality we should practice three disciplines the Buddha has kindly advised. They are;

1. Virtue (*Sila*-සීල)
2. Tranquility (*Samādhī*-සමාධි)
3. Wisdom (*Paññā*-පඤ්ඤා)

With the clear knowledge of the cessation of suffering, we form self-discipline in our speech and behavior. Before we do or say something, we reflect on it again and again whether it is good or bad, right or wrong, whether it is useful in this life and hereafter. As much as we have this discipline in our behavior, we have no mistakes. We can remember our life with a pleasant mind because of our good behavior. This discipline in our behavior and speech helps us to go forward in the path of purification practicing meditation purifying our mind. Virtue or moral conduct is the foundation of the spiritual path. Therefore, the Buddha has mostly pointed out the importance of practicing virtue. Discipline in senses is also very important and useful for a successful moral life. Because of virtuous life we are honored in the society where we live.

In purification of the mind, we mainly use two meditation techniques that are tranquility (or concentration) and insight. In the tranquility meditation, we keep our mind with a particular good thought. As a result of concentrated mind, we can live for a long time without suffering and stress, but it is not permanent and it can be changed. Here we practice and develop our awareness especially in mind and body. We practice to do all kinds of activities mindfully. Mindfulness is one of the most important qualities that we have to develop for purification of our mind. Also mindfulness helps us to keep our mind in the present moment. The nature of our mind is going to the past and future without awareness. Hence mindfulness is highly praised in Buddhism.

That is why Buddhism illustrates the one and only way;

for the purification of beings (*Sattānam visuddhiyā*),

for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation (*soka-pariddavānam samatikkhamāya*),

for the destruction of pain and grief (*dukkhadomanassanam attamgamaya*),

for the gaining of wisdom (*ñāyassa adhigamāya*)

for the attaining or realization of Nibbana or enlightenment (*nibbānassa sacchikiriyāya*)

which is practicing the fourfold mindfulness.

By practicing tranquility meditation, we train our mind to live in the present moment with mindfulness. And when mind goes to the past or future, we are aware of mind. There are forty techniques in Buddhism to develop mindfulness. When we practice those techniques with right understanding, we don't stop in concentration. We go forward seeing the world reality which is impermanence.

Concentration is not enough to eradicate defilements completely. That is why Buddhism advises us to develop another step that is insight meditation for permanent happiness. Here, with the

concentrated mind, we reflect on all kinds of things that mental and physical on three characteristics of existence (ත්‍රිලක්ෂණ). They are;

i.	Impermanence,	<i>Anicca</i>	-අනිත්‍ය
ii.	Unsatisfactoriness	<i>Dukkha</i>	-දුක්ඛ
iii.	Selflessness	<i>Anatta</i>	-අනාත්ම

We reflect again and again on these three characteristics of existence (*Tilakkhana*-ත්‍රිලක්ෂණ). As a result of practicing this world reality, we develop wisdom with the knowledge of impermanence. Simultaneously, we develop five qualities which are confidence (*Saddhā*-සද්ධා), effort (*Viriya*-වීරිය), mindfulness (*Sati*-සති), concentration (*Samādhi*-සමාධි) and wisdom (*Paññā*-පඤ්ඤා). As the result of practicing The Noble Eightfold Path with mindfulness and wisdom, we gradually reach the real happiness decreasing defilements. Final experience of this is living in the present moment with full awareness seeing arising and ceasing without any desirable attachment or destruction. It means we have overcome unsatisfactoriness and suffering. As soon as we get any experience in our senses, we are able to see them as impermanent. We understand that it was not there before the experience, and also nothing remains after the experience. Every moment of our experience arises when conditions are together, and the experience ceases when conditions separate. This is the ultimate truth that we have to realize for the ultimate goal that is the liberation, Nibbana.

This is the path that leads to reduce three defilements permanently. As the result of practicing these three disciplines, we gradually decrease unwholesome thoughts and achieve real happiness. This is the real success in our life because it helps us to live in the noble bliss of liberation. On this path loving kindness and mindfulness play a main role.



May the Triple Gem Bless you!

තෙරුවන් සරණයි!

May All Beings be Well, Happy and Peaceful!

(සියලු සත්ත්වයෝ සුවපත් වෙත්වා!)